

A

Postscript

TO THE

SECOND SERIES OF LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

TRINITARIANS AND CALVINISTS,

IN REPLY TO

THE REMARKS OF DR. WOODS

ON

THOSE LETTERS.

BY HENRY WARE, D. D.

Hollis Professor of Divinity in the University at Cambridge.

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Duke Divinity School

POSTSCRIPT.

I KNOW not whether an apology to the public for the late appearance of this pamphlet, or for its appearance at all, be more reasonably required. The explanation which I have to offer in both respects is drawn from the circumstances of the case. I had considered the controversy as closed with my last publication; as I supposed that all had then been said on both sides, that would be likely to be interesting and useful to the christian community; and that not much further light would be thrown on the subject, should it be continued. I thought also, that no ordinary circumstances could require a discussion to be continued beyond the limits, which this had already passed; or justify those engaged in it in laying a further tax on the public attention.

When, therefore, the publication, which is the subject of my present notice, appeared in September last, it was my wish, and intention at first, to suffer it to pass without a reply. I was unwilling to have the public attention drawn off from the

great question between us, to a mere trial of logical acuteness, and controversial skill ; which seemed to me to be too much the character, that the discussion had already assumed. I believed too, that the public was interested, as it ought to be, solely in ascertaining the truth or the balance of evidence in the great points at issue, and not at all in the dexterity with which the weapons of controversy are employed on either side ; and I doubted whether the means of making up an opinion on the subject were likely to be much increased by the controversy being prolonged. I was desirous, therefore, if upon mature reflection it should seem consistent with justice to myself, and to the cause in which I had offered my services, to be silent, and leave the subject at rest.

A more careful review of the Remarks has led me to think, that I ought to depart from my first intention, and that what I have to offer in reply to those remarks will be thought of sufficient importance for my justification, in claiming again the public indulgence.

On the use of the words *innocence*, *purity*, and *holiness*, the charge of inconsistency is again urged, which was distinctly and fully answered in my last Letters. It might have been sufficient now to refer you to that answer, as it is contained in my Second Series of Letters (pp. 7—15) for a complete refutation of all that is here said. By comparing that passage with the charge here again repeated, some surprise will probably be excited, that Dr. Woods

should choose to draw the reader's attention again to the subject; and that he should be willing to have the manner, in which the inconsistency was made out, again exposed to view. This and several other instances, in which an inconsistency was attempted to be made out by a palpable misrepresentation of the meaning of what I had said, I was then willing to attribute to inadvertence, carelessness, or any other cause, that should exonerate Dr. Woods from *intentional unfairness or want of argumentative justice*. The present repetition of the charge, upon the same grounds with which it was then made, will justify me in putting a different construction upon it.

Nothing more, I am satisfied, can now be needed, but for you to read the passage just referred to, together with the distinct statement of my opinion on this subject on the 20th and 21st pages of my first Letters. It will there appear, that what I have constantly maintained, and respecting which you will find no contradiction, and no confusion in the use of words, is, That man is born into the world innocent and pure,—free from all moral corruption;—by which I always mean, that he is not a sinner, in the first place, by having another's sin imputed to him, before having actually sinned himself personally; nor, in the next place, by having a nature given him by God, that is wholly sinful, or prone only to sin:—That man is by nature perfectly free from any quality or tendency, that should make him hateful to his Maker, or deserving of any punish-

ment at his hands, and that he continues so, until he has become the subject of some moral exercises:—That there is nothing in his nature, which makes it more certain that his first moral exercises will be sinful, than that they will be holy; because there is nothing that inclines him more to that which is morally bad, than to that which is morally good. It was to prove and illustrate this, that, among other arguments, the early character of children was introduced; showing that it is always a mixed character, consisting of some right affections and some that are wrong, and manifesting some tendencies and dispositions to sin and some to holiness, as early as any moral character or tendency can be observed. This agrees with the experience of every parent and instructor of children, and this I considered as decisive evidence, that there could be nothing *previously existing in the nature of the child, the tendency of which was exclusively either to the one or the other*,—nothing, therefore, by which it was constituted or proved to be by nature either holy or sinful. It seemed to me plain, that if the disposition and tendency of nature were wholly sinful, nothing but sinful volitions and sinful actions could follow; so that if, as early as we can discern any exercise of the moral powers in a child, we can discover some that are right, it is rendered certain, that it is *not by nature totally depraved*. I mentioned some of this kind, which Dr. Woods admits to be the common traits of early life, but which he denies to be of *the nature of holiness*, and consequently does not allow to possess *moral qualities*.

But if those amiable qualities and dispositions and actions are no evidences of *holiness* or *a good moral state*, I see not how the opposite qualities, dispositions and actions can be evidences of *sinfulness*, or *a bad moral state*. If the wrath, envy, falsehood, selfishness, which are alleged by the orthodox as the evidences of sinfulness in children, are so in reality; then the kind dispositions, veracity, and love of rectitude, which exist as early, must be admitted as marks of holiness. If the former are of a moral nature, the latter are equally so. Nothing I think could show more clearly how closely the doctrine is felt by the orthodox to be pressed at this point, than for Dr. Woods to be driven to the necessity of persisting in the denial of moral qualities to the dispositions and actions referred to. It is saying, that the indulgence of the bad passions *is morally wrong*, and yet that the acting under the influence of the opposite good ones *is not morally right*; that to hate a fellow being and try to do him harm is evidence of *a bad moral state*, and yet, that to love him, and be disposed to do him good, is no mark of *a good moral state*. The argument, you will perceive, on this point, wholly turns upon the question, whether the good dispositions and affections, which are admitted to be characteristic of early life, are of a moral character or not.

That it is necessary, in order to support the doctrine of native depravity, *to assert that they are not*, is alone, to my mind, a decisive proof of the falsity of the doctrine, and of the radical unsoundness of the whole system, of which it lies at the founda-

tion. For, consider what are the natural practical consequences. If the virtues, the amiable qualities, and good dispositions and affections of *children* are not to be regarded as moral qualities; if they are pronounced to be no marks of moral goodness; the same qualities and dispositions will be no marks of goodness and of a regenerate state *in persons in mature life*. Marks and evidences of regeneration of a different kind will be relied upon, and regeneration itself will be regarded as a kind of metaphysical change, which one may undergo without any reference to these traits of character, or any alteration in his dispositions or practice in respect to them. Thus the holiness, which is supposed to constitute a regenerate state, will come to be regarded as something wholly distinct from practical virtue; to consist either in speculative opinions, or in some abstract metaphysical exercises, which are distinct from all that is practical. And the regenerate person will be one, who believes in certain doctrines, has *forced his heart to acquiesce* in those doctrines; and under their influence having certain powerful exercises, which he considers as constituting religion, will be satisfied with them, while he is no more faithful than he was before in performing the social and domestic duties. More than this; while he yields himself up to what he considers the peculiar exercises of religion, he may even be less attentive than he was before to the government of his temper, to the care of his family, to truth and uprightness in the intercourse of life, to promote the happiness of all about

him. Nor can he be reasonably censured for this, if it be true, that the kind dispositions, the love of truth and rectitude, and the acts of justice and benevolence, which he thus neglects and undervalues, have no moral good in them, and accordingly have no tendency to recommend him to God.

I have already said, that in the present instance, as in the former publication, Dr. Woods has made out his charge of inconsistency by a palpable misrepresentation of what I had said. He asserts, that I “frequently suggest, that the innocence, purity, and simplicity of little children, *are not moral qualities, that they imply no holiness, and no moral character.*” (p. 295.) He does not tell you where the suggestion is to be found, and you will look for it in vain in any part of my Letters; and not only so, but you will find *the opposite to this assertion uniformly implied and repeatedly insisted upon.*

Another unfounded assertion, of which considerable use is made, is, “that I allowed, that in the use of the phrase, *destitute of holiness*, I had used a phrase, which expresses a meaning that I did not intend to express.” By turning to the page to which he has referred, you will find, that no such concession was made. And you will learn, that, in the very passage referred to, I not only made no such concession, but on the contrary clearly showed, that my meaning in the passage in question had been misrepresented; and further asserted, *that every reader, not excepting Dr. Woods himself, knew, that the meaning which he fixed upon my words was different from that, which I did intend by them.*

This charge, Dr. Woods has not ventured to contradict. Indeed my meaning in the phrase in question was too obvious to be mistaken by a reader of common attention, and of the most ordinary intelligence.

Under such circumstances, you will not think it strange, that I should, as I did then, pronounce *that* to be *an unlucky phrase*, which had been perverted, to say the least, to so singular a purpose. Not *an unlucky phrase* in the sense in which Dr. Woods chooses repeatedly to echo it; as if I admitted, that it justly exposed me to the charge of inconsistency; but in a sense not very flattering to him, who had made such a use of it. I can never hope to be *so lucky* in the choice of words, as to escape inconsistency, if such interpretation be put upon them.

Dr. Woods has repeated (p. 303) the charge, which he had before exhibited in his first publication, and repeated in his second, viz. "*That Unitarians consider a difficulty, which they are not able to solve, as sufficient to disprove a doctrine, supported by clear and conclusive evidence.*" This was a charge, as I supposed, so utterly without foundation, and which did so great a wrong to Unitarians, that I called on Dr. Woods to support his charge by proof. He now admits, that he cannot refer to any author, by whom the principle is avowed; yet still insists upon its truth. But its truth, as he has stated the charge, can only be proved by *the general avowal of the principle*

by Unitarians. For the charge is applied to Unitarians universally, and it is an explicit charge of adopting the principle. To say, as he does, that he can produce examples, in which this mode of reasoning is exhibited, I shall show, will not answer his purpose, for this reason, that it goes upon the supposition that *he* has such access to the heart of the writer, that he knows the secret influence by which his judgment is biassed, of which the writer himself declares himself unconscious. “I could refer,” says Dr. Woods, “to many a book, and particularly to the one, to which I have offered a reply, and to the part of it, which relates to this very subject, as exhibiting the very mode of reasoning here complained of.” The charge is here sufficiently distinct, explicit, and individual. The author of the Letters to Trinitarians &c. is here directly and personally charged with furnishing an example of the mode of reasoning objected against, viz. *considering a difficulty, which he is unable to solve, as sufficient to disprove a doctrine supported by clear and conclusive evidence.* And what is the proof upon which Dr. Woods is willing to risk this assertion? “The evidence,” he says, “which supports the doctrine of natural depravity, is *in my view clear and conclusive*; and I think it would be so in Dr. Ware’s view, were it not for certain difficulties, which he is not able to solve.” But is Dr. Woods yet to learn, that evidence, which to one mind may be *clear and conclusive*, to another equally honest and faithful, may wholly fail to produce conviction? Or is *his mind* the standard, by which all others

are to be tried, and there must be some intellectual or moral defect in any one, that is not satisfied with the same reasoning, and convinced by the same evidence that satisfies him? The fact is, as I stated at large in my Letters, that the evidence which he has brought for native depravity is, *in my mind*, wholly insufficient to prove the doctrine, and I am perfectly satisfied, that I have shown with the clearness of a moral demonstration, that the orthodox doctrine of native depravity is taught neither by reason, experience, nor scripture. And with this strong conviction, I might, on the same grounds and with equal reason, have said, that Dr. Woods and the orthodox were prevented from coming to the same result that I had, not because the evidence in the case was not conclusive, but because there are some *metaphysical difficulties* in accounting for the origin and the universality of sin, on any other supposition, but that of native depravity and original disposition and tendency; *and the orthodox consider a difficulty which they are not able to solve as sufficient to disprove a doctrine supported by clear and conclusive evidence.* That I refrained from this mode of reasoning was not because the thought did not occur to me; but because I thought it not right to exhibit a charge, however true I might believe it to be, which, from the nature of the thing, was incapable of proof; and quite indecorous, without the clearest proof, to attribute to my opponent so great an intellectual or moral defect, as is implied in such a charge.

But I have something further to observe, with respect to these *metaphysical difficulties* on the one hand, which have so much weight with the orthodox ; and *moral difficulties* on the other hand, which Unitarians think so important. There can be no doubt, that each of them is deserving of consideration ; and no one can be intitled to the character of a fair and liberal inquirer, who wholly overlooks either of them, in making up his mind, as to the foundation of the two opposite systems. But suppose the direct evidence from experience and scripture were equal on both sides, (which I am fully persuaded, however, is very far otherwise, and that it is decisive on the side of the Unitarian faith,) suppose it were equal, I say, and our opinion were to be decided by our estimate of the weight, which we think should be allowed to the respective difficulties, by which each system is pressed ; the question then for us to decide will be, to which of the difficulties it is reasonable for us to allow the most influence in determining our choice.

Now the difficulties, as I have stated, which press upon the Calvinistic scheme, are wholly of a *moral nature* ; those objections which the opposite scheme has to encounter are *metaphysical only*. The Calvinist has to reconcile his scheme with the moral character and moral government of God, and with the moral and accountable condition of man ; and this, he will not deny, is an arduous task, and one that requires him to subdue the feelings of nature, and to silence the voice of reason. The Unitarian, on the other hand, can never so fully

explain the nature of moral liberty, the influence of motives, the consistency of contingency with fore-knowledge, and the existence of certainty without necessity, that the scheme shall be pressed with no remaining difficulty. But it seems to me, that a little just reflection will decide for us, which of these difficulties ought to have the most weight, on the supposition that the direct and positive evidence on that side be not absolutely conclusive, nor invalidated by opposite evidence. And the single reflection I think is this, that we are far more competent to judge upon moral, than upon metaphysical questions, being capable of the most clear and satisfactory knowledge of moral truth, while we can only arrive at uncertain conclusions in our metaphysical inquiries. And this is particularly the case, as to the great metaphysical and moral questions, which are brought into view in this controversy.

Of the nature of efficient causes, of the manner in which the will is influenced by motives, and what degree of power the agent may or may not have over the will, independent of motives, or in limiting their influence, we can have but imperfect knowledge, and ought to be modest in our decisions: but we may be perfectly confident in pronouncing what is, and what is not, consistent with moral rectitude. We are certain that malevolence, cruelty, injustice can never be right, and can never be the attributes of a holy being.

How it is possible for God to make a being capable of moral freedom, and how he can foreknow

the free actions of such a being, we may not be able to explain ; but we can certainly know, that a being morally good, will not make a single creature, much less a whole race of beings, so inclined by nature to evil, and indisposed to good, as to be from the first the objects of his hatred and wrath, and continue so till their nature is changed by a divine influence, which he never grants them. And we are sure, that he will not require of such beings a change, which he has made it *morally impossible* for them to experience, and yet inflict eternal punishments upon them for failing to do it. Yet this I think is nothing more, than a fair statement of the moral difficulty, under which the orthodox system labours.

I perceive nothing further, that requires animadversion, till, on p. 308, we meet with the heavy charge of misrepresenting the orthodox faith in respect to the *power, capacity, or ability* of man to do, what God requires of him. “Now I did hope,” says Dr. Woods, “*after all that had been written on this subject*, that Dr. Ware would never again invest orthodoxy in such false colours.” But I shall take the liberty of showing, that the colours of which he complains, whether true or false, are *all* of them such, as I have taken directly from what “*has been written on the subject*,” and written by the most distinguished and approved orthodox divines, and amongst them, by the author of Letters addressed to Unitarians.

He returns to the same charge again, p. 346, in a tone of pretty strong feeling.—“Before Dr. Ware

has done with this point, he repeats perhaps, *for the tenth or twentieth time*, what I am sorry he ever repeated once ; I mean that vulgar charge which contains too much apparent truth to be directly denied, and yet too much falsehood to be admitted, namely, that we represent men to be, as God made them, totally depraved, *incapable* of any good till renewed by *irresistible influence*, irreversibly appointed to destruction, without any regard to their sins" &c.

No doubt Dr. Woods is sorry to have a feature of the orthodox system presented to view at all, that is so utterly irreconcileable with the moral government of God, and the moral condition of man. It has been his care, as it is that of many of the most discerning of the orthodox of the present day, to keep it out of view, as much as possible ; and they usually manifest the same kind of irritation which is here expressed, whenever they are brought to the alternative, of either avowing and defending this part of the system, or of denying it, and endeavouring to repel a charge, which is admitted to contain too much apparent truth to be *directly denied*, yet, as is asserted by our author, too much falsehood to be admitted.

But, if it be so, why does he not proceed to point out what the falsehood is, which it is alleged to contain ? To me it seems, that the proposition in which the charge is expressed is a very simple one, and must be either wholly true, or wholly false. It is either true or false, that Calvinism does represent man, as being by nature *incapable of any good*

till renewed by irresistible influence. If this proposition contains too much truth to be denied, I am at a loss what falsehood it can contain, until Dr. Woods shall see fit to point it out. I know his *careful concession* is, *apparent truth*; but I think he will not avail himself of the equivocation which lurks in that phrase. If it were *apparent only* and not *real truth*, it might be directly denied, because then it would be *real falsehood*.

But nothing can be more clear, and nothing is more easily proved, than that it contains only pure and unmixed truth:—that it expresses nothing more than genuine Calvinism,—nothing more than the founder of the sect and the greatest of his followers have distinctly avowed, and expressed in the same words, or in those of the same import. To the proof of this, I now proceed, requesting you to compare the complaint of Dr. Woods with the several passages, which I shall quote from a few distinguished orthodox writers.

I begin with Calvin. In the 2d chapter of the 2d book of his Institutes, he treats of the freedom of the will, and gives us with great clearness his notions on the subject of the moral power of man. He endeavours to prove, that in the primitive state of innocence, man was endowed with freedom of the will, which was lost, when he sinned; and that his descendants are born into the world inheriting his nature in its fallen state, despoiled of that power over the will, which *he* enjoyed at first; and that, without the grace of God, *man has only the power of doing evil*. This he goes on to illustrate and fortify

by reasoning. In answering the objections of the advocates of the freedom of the will, he takes occasion to show,

That the *necessity of sin* does not render man the less accountable for it, nor make it the less proper, that he should be charged with it; and on the other hand, that its being *voluntary* is no proof that it could be avoided. That exhortations, admonitions, and expostulations are not administered to no purpose, though it be not in the power of man to obey. That we are not to infer from the commands of God, that man has any power of observing them. That conditional promises do not imply, that man has the free power of doing that, upon which the promise is suspended; and that God is not chargeable with mocking our impotence, when he invites us to deserve his favour, though he knows our utter inability to do it. *Quos novit esse prorsus impotentes.* In fine, he defends the reasonableness of our being reproached for not doing that, which it was not in our power to do. Vid. Calv. Inst. Lib. II. Cap. 2, § 6, 7, 8. Cap. 4, § 8. Cap. 5, § 1, 4, 5.

With these passages before you, I ask, how Calvin could have expressed with more strength and exactness, than he has done, the sentiment, which it has given so much offence to Dr. Woods to have charged upon the orthodox? which he pronounces to be a *vulgar charge, that invests orthodoxy in false colours?*—Yet I am not afraid of being contradicted by Dr. Woods, when I assert, that a hundred instances may be quoted from the works of Calvin, in which the same sentiment is expressed with equal strength.

I pass next to the Assembly's Catechism and Confession of faith.—In exact conformity with the language used by Calvin on the subject, the Westminster divines express human inability by saying, that

"Man in his state of innocence had freedom and power to will and to do that, which was good ; and that by his fall *he hath wholly lost all ability to will any spiritual good accompanying salvation, so as a natural man,*" [by which is always meant, one who has not been regenerated by the special influence of the Spirit of God,] "is utterly indisposed, *disabled*, and made opposite to all good, dead in sin, and *is not able by his own strength to convert himself*, or to prepare himself thereunto."

One of the most learned Calvinistic divines of the early part of the last century was Gill. In his *Body of Divinity*, on the subject of regeneration, he says, that

"Previous to regeneration, men are dead, morally dead—dead in a moral sense, as to spiritual things, in all the powers and faculties of their souls :—that they have no more knowledge of them, affection for them, will to them, or *power to perform them, than a dead man has with respect to things natural.*"

In the instances hitherto produced, I have not forgotten that Dr. Woods may object, that he has precluded all inferences to be drawn from the writings of the earlier Calvinists, by having stated in his Letters to Unitarians, "That the orthodox of New England at the present day are not chargeable with the erroneous opinions of their predecessors." For although he availed himself of it then only to exonerate the orthodox from the absurdity of maintaining the Calvinistic doctrine of imputation ; he may now think it desirable, as I then intimated might ere long be the case, to be rid of another unmanageable part of the old doctrine of original sin, viz. the *utter impotence of man, and his entire inability to do the will of God*, which was a favorite opinion of the early Calvinists;

and of which, notwithstanding the modern improvements which the system has undergone, I shall be able to find some traces in times not very far distant from the present. I shall confine myself to the mention of a few names.

President Edwards, though a contemporary with the last mentioned, Gill, is referred to in such a manner by Dr. Woods, as leads me to suppose, that he is held in as high estimation, as any other writer on the side of orthodoxy; and that his opinions, and the language in which he expresses them, are approved by *the orthodox of the present day.*

In his treatise on original sin he uses the following expressions. (*Works, vol. vi. p. 322. 324.*)

“ So long as men are in their natural state, they not only have no good thing, but *it is impossible they should have or do any good thing.*” And again, “ *It is impossible man should be otherwise while in his natural state,*” that is, totally corrupt, wholly a stranger and enemy to true virtue and holiness, and *not susceptible of the things of the spirit of God*, because “ they are not discerned by means of any principle in nature, but altogether by a principle that is divine, something introduced by the grace of God’s holy Spirit, which is above all that is natural.”

In a Sermon having this title, “ Men naturally God’s enemies,” he has the following expressions. Speaking of the nature of man, he says,

“ It is wholly infected with this enmity against God. *Every faculty and principle of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity against God.* Every faculty is entirely and perfectly subdued under it, and enslaved by it. The *understanding* is under the reigning power of this enmity. The *will* is wholly under the reigning power of it. *All the affections* are governed

by enmity against God ; there is not one affection, nor one desire, that a natural man has, or that he is ever stirred up to act from, but what contains in it enmity against God A natural man is as full of enmity against God, as any viper, or any venomous beast is full of poison.

"The power of the enmity of natural man against God is so great, that it is insuperable by any finite power. It has too great and strong possession of the heart to be overcome by any created power. Natural men cannot overcome their own enmity, let them strive never so much with their own hearts."

In another Sermon, entitled,—"Sinners in the hands of an angry God," after a very vivid representation of the fearful condition of the sinner,

"Hanging by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing around, ready every moment to burn it asunder ;" he expresses in the following very strong language the *utter impossibility* of his doing any thing to effect his escape from the danger. "You have nothing to lay hold of to save yourself; nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, *nothing that you can do*, to induce God to spare you one moment."

Thomas Scott is another author, whose writings are so diligently circulated by the orthodox, that we are not allowed to doubt his expressing the opinions which they mean to maintain, on so important a subject, as the power possessed by men in a state of nature, and the influence by which they are to be brought into a state of grace. No books, I believe, have of late been more warmly recommended or more generally read by the orthodox, than his Force of Truth, and his Notes on the Bible. In his note on John iii. 3. we meet with the following.

"Man by nature is unholy, and *cannot relish or even discern* the excellency of true religion.....*He can neither repent, submit,*

believe, love, nor obey; but must remain a rebel, an enemy, &c. He must be inwardly and effectually changed, before he can understand the nature and glory of the gospel.... The new birth must precede all the actions of the spiritual life: till that has taken place, the man can *neither see, hear, speak, walk, nor work in a spiritual manner* In this new birth "*a real creation is effected by his omnipotence, (that of God.)* The regenerated sinner has the substance of all holy dispositions communicated to his soul When the grace of God changes the sinner's heart, he becomes possessed of *new capacities, perceptions, affections, and dispositions, becomes capable of employments and satisfactions to which he was before an utter stranger....* The new birth is the beginning of spiritual life, without which *we can no more live a heavenly life, than we could an earthly one without being born into this world.*"

In a note on 1 Cor. ii. 14. he speaks of

A spiritual capacity being produced by the spirit of God upon the mind. And in another on Eph. ii. 2. he says, that "*death in trespasses and sins,*" which he considers as the unregenerate state of man, "*implies an utter incapacity for spiritual employments and satisfactions: and a total inability of worshipping and obeying him with love and delight."*"

These expressions, and others of similar import, are to be found recurring whenever the subject admits; and the sentiments they express run through the whole work. The words and the sentiments, you perceive, are the same as those, which excite so much sensation as quoted from my letters. They are certainly not less strong, and they are repeated "*for the tenth or twentieth time,*" not in a pamphlet of 150 pages, but on a single page.

The late President Dwight is probably regarded by the orthodox as one of the ablest, the clearest, and soundest writers that has of late attempted to explain and defend the system. At least he will lie

under no suspicion of intentionally misrepresenting their views for the purpose of rendering them disgusting. In his THEOLOGY, vol. iii, pp. 92, 93, 97, 105, he says,

"No unregenerate man was probably ever convinced, except, by trying his own strength, that he was *unable*, of himself, to perform virtuous actions, and that he will never possess a better disposition but by the renovating agency of the spirit of God Convinced at length, that *all his efforts must*, without the *immediate assistance of God*, prove entirely vain, &c. &c. . . . From the same source of instruction he learns the true nature of his own efforts he sees how *destitute* they are of real holiness, and *how unavailing* to recommend him to God. The sinner needs to understand his helplessness, and his absolute necessity of being renewed by the spirit of grace." "When the convinced sinner has *by a succession by earnest efforts* to save himself, proved his *utter inability* to accomplish the important work, he becomes convinced it is absolutely necessary for him to *cast himself* wholly upon God as *incapable of renewing himself, or of being renewed, but by the power of the Holy Ghost.*" In regeneration, "God gives him a new and virtuous disposition. . . . The convinced sinner feels his own *utter inability* to satisfy the demands of the divine law; and to reconcile himself to God."

Page 41. "If the natural man *cannot* receive the things of the spirit of God; if they are *incapable* of being discerned without a spiritual taste and character, then the agency of the spirit of God in our regeneration is *absolutely necessary.*" Pages 42, 43, he shows why it is *impossible* for man to regenerate himself. . . and the *absolute necessity* of an *extraneous agency* to effect it.

Fuller, a popular Calvinistic divine, whose works have been much circulated and read, asserts, that

"The spirit of God, in regeneration, does *produce a new principle in the heart.*" . . . our hearts "being by nature

wholly depraved, we need an *almighty and invincible* power to renew them." and the entire *inability* of the sinner, he asserts, by the following remarkable expressions. "If a sinner could return to God of his own accord, or even by *divine influence helping or assisting him*, it must be upon the supposition of some will, wish, or desire to set about it. But if men are totally alienated from God, all desire after him must be extinct; and all the warnings, invitations, and expostulations of the word *will be ineffectual*; yea, *divine influence itself will be ineffectual, if it falls short of renewing the heart.*"

I know not what stronger language could be employed to express *inability, incapacity, want of power to any moral purpose in the unregenerate*, and the *irresistible* and *invincible* nature of that divine influence by which their first good moral feeling or act must be produced. And although Dr. Woods seems so much dissatisfied now with the phrase *irresistible influence*, and by the mark he has set upon it, is clearly to be understood as charging me with doing injustice to the orthodox, when I represent the doctrine of irresistible influence in regeneration as making a part of the orthodox faith; yet in his first publication, Letters to Unitarians, he seems to have thought quite differently on the subject. He there expressly, and at some length, defends the use of the terms *irresistible, overpowering, and invincible*, and shows that they are in good and legitimate use by the orthodox, and will bear an unexceptionable meaning. Nor can he complain, that I have charged the orthodox with applying them in a different sense from that which he has justified. He cannot say, that I have, in any instance, given them a meaning that is

not fully authorized by the explanation, which he has given of their force, as applied to the subject; cautiously and guardedly as he has expressed himself.

There is a volume of Sermons by Henry Martyn, a late missionary to the East, which has been recently republished here under circumstances, which authorize the presumption, that the sentiments they express are approved by the orthodox, and are such as those, who give a tone and direction to the orthodox community are willing to inculcate. In one of them I find the following passage.

“ There is in the dead body no power to return to life ; neither is there in the soul any ability to attain a spiritual life, or the exercise of holy affection toward God..... There is in the dead body no spark of life, that time or care may fan into a flame ; it will remain a corpse ; nothing but the power of God can raise it from the dead. In like manner there is in the natural man no latent principle of spiritual life ; without a divine intercessor he must ever remain as he is ; no good education, no good resolutions, as they are called, will ever make him a good man, except there be a superadded principle from above, a change wrought in him by an eternal agent, life put into him by the spirit of God..... he is born guilty, he is a child of wrath. Antecedently to our works or even moral agency, even in infancy, we are under the wrath of God. The account to be given of this doctrine, as we hold it, is this, that God dealt with Adam in a collective capacity, as the father of mankind ; and when he became guilty, all his descendants became guilty likewise.”

But perhaps those which I have quoted are the orthodox writers, to whom Dr. Woods referred in his Letters, p. 52, as men deficient in judgment, who had expressed themselves incautiously ; and

are not to be relied on as expressing accurately the opinions of orthodoxy, “as it exists at present.”

I must then have recourse to other authorities, against which there can be no such exception; and none will surely be more unexceptionable than that of the author of Letters to Unitarians. Now as the words *incapable* and *irresistible*, and those only, are marked by Dr. Woods, I am to presume that those are the offensive words, and that he would be understood to intimate that they express more than is maintained by the orthodox.

I would then make the direct appeal to Dr. Woods, whether he is prepared to say, that man is by nature *capable*, explaining the word as he has himself explained it below, i. e. that he has the *power, capacity, or ability* to have any good inclination, &c. If his answer be, that *man has not this power*, then he had no reason to make the complaint now under consideration, although the particular word used was not one that he had used in this controversy. If on the other hand, his answer be, that *man has that power*, I must then confront this assertion with others, which he has employed upon the subject elsewhere, and especially with one of the most important points which are at issue between us. I am sensible that Dr. Woods has been more cautious and guarded in his manner of expressing himself on this subject, than orthodox writers generally; and has avoided the use of those strong expressions, which occur so frequently in their writings. Yet as I clearly showed by an induction of particulars in my first series of Letters,

he has expressed what implies, and what he undoubt-
edly meant should be understood as implying, *all*
that other respectable orthodox divines have *dis-*
tinctly said on this subject. Unless, in the whole
series of his publications he has been trifling with
the religious community by the use of *cautious lan-*
guage and *equivocal expressions*, saying what may
mean any thing or nothing, as suits the exigence;
he has in fact expressed, all that is to be found in
the passages from Edwards, Scott, Martyn, &c.
which have just been quoted, and all to the full
extent, which is expressed in his quotations from
my answer.

That I may not be liable to mistake, and to the
charge of misrepresentation in the statement I am
about to make, I will do it in the words which I
used in my former Letters, and which, as no objec-
tion was made to the statement in Dr. Woods'
Reply, I may presume is acknowledged to be
correct. After giving several extracts from the
Westminster Confession and Andover Creed, I
proceeded pp. 117—120.

"A cursory reading of Dr. Woods' Letter on this subject
might lead to an impression of something short of the doctrine
expressed in these extracts; but the following sentence, taken
in the connexion in which it is used, and in connexion with
the other doctrines defended in his Letters, will be found, I
think, to express or imply all that is contained in the fuller
and more naked and undisguised statement of the Westminster
Divines. He is speaking of the meaning of the words *irresis-*
tible, overpowering, as used by orthodox writers, in reference
to the divine influence upon the minds of men, when he says
(p. 116,) 'What the nature of the disorder is, God knows, and
is perfectly able to apply a suitable and efficacious remedy.'

Now, when this almighty Physician kindly undertakes the cure of our souls, the obstinacy of the disorder yields; its resistance is taken away: that is to say, the heart is effectually cleansed from its pollution; love of sin, enmity to God, pride, ingratitude, and selfish, earthly desires are subdued, and man is induced to love God, and obey his commands.' He had before explained the orthodox faith in general by saying (p. 108,) 'We believe, that all virtue or holiness in man is to be ascribed to the influence of the divine spirit, and that, without the effectual agency of the spirit, man would have no holy affections, and perform no acts of holy obedience.'

"Now what is the disorder, to which the efficacious remedy is to be applied; and for which, as we shall see, there is no other cure? If we look back to the fifth and sixth letters of Dr. Woods, we shall find it described. It is a state of entire moral corruption, in which every man is born into the world, and in which every man continues until he is renewed by the holy spirit. It is, that men are by nature, that is, as they came first from the hand of the Creator, destitute of holiness; not only so, but subjects of an innate moral depravity, from the first inclined to evil, and while unrenewed, their affections and actions wholly wrong. This is the disease, as to its nature and extent.

"Passing to the next letters, seventh and eighth, we are told to whom and on what ground, a cure is applied. Those, who are to be delivered from this moral bondage, this original state of depravity, to be regenerated, renewed, and saved, are selected from the mass of mankind by a sovereign act of the divine will, without any thing in them, as the reason why they were chosen, rather than the others, who are passed by, left to remain in sin, and to perish for ever.

"Being thus elected, thus predestinated to eternal life, they become the subjects of the efficacious, renovating influence, under consideration. And when this 'almighty Physician undertakes the cure, the disorder yields.' He cannot be defeated. He cannot be resisted. The fact then is, that all, whom God undertakes to renew, all to whom he applies that effectual influence, which is to subdue the obstinacy of the dis-

order, are in fact renewed. The love of sin and enmity to God are subdued, and they are brought to the love of God and obedience. And this effect is produced, because he who knows the disorder has known how to apply a remedy ; and has applied one, which must produce a cure.

" It follows, then, that this remedy has been applied to *no others*. Those who are not renewed have none of this influence employed upon them ; for if they had, they also would have been renewed, since this influence is efficacious, cannot be resisted, cannot be defeated. Their failure then is for the want of that, which is granted to the others, and without which it was impossible for them to be renewed and saved. ' All virtue, all holiness in man is to be ascribed to this efficacious influence ; without it man would have no holy affections, and would perform no acts of holy obedience.' (p. 108) Those, then, who have holiness and virtue, have it solely in consequence of their having this influence, which makes them, and cannot fail to make them holy ; and those who have none, but remain unholy, sinful, enemies to God, are destitute of it solely because they have not that influence, which, if they had, could not fail to produce the same effect in them, which it has produced in others. This is but a fair and full, unexaggerated development of the doctrine, according to Dr. Woods' own statement of it. And whether it be not in every point the same as that which is more clearly stated in the Westminster Confession, every one can judge."

Now with what justice can Dr. Woods, in the face of this statement, faithfully drawn from his own expressions, complain of my misrepresenting the orthodox faith on the subject of man's ability in the state of nature ? Can he assert, that *man is by nature capable of having a good thought, or affection, or inclination, without an influence of the spirit, which he can do nothing to obtain, and which, when it is given, he cannot resist* ?

But besides this, there is an Instrument, which Dr. Woods has occasion to subscribe once in five years. As it was drawn up within a few years for a very important purpose, and by men who cannot be suspected of willingly investing orthodoxy with false colours, in order to render it odious, they may be supposed to have used great deliberation, and care, and accuracy, in the statement of its doctrines. As Dr. Woods has twice at least, if not three times, declared it to express his faith by solemnly setting his name to it; we may reasonably consider it as expressing what he sincerely believes; as much so, as any thing that he has himself published.

In that Instrument are contained the following passages :

“ By nature every man is personally depraved, destitute of holiness, unlike and opposed to God, and previously to the renewing agency of the divine spirit, all his moral actions are adverse to the character and glory of God ; *being morally incapable of recovering the image of his Creator*, which was lost in Adam, every man is justly exposed to eternal damnation ; so that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God God, of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity elected some to everlasting life no means whatever can change the heart of a sinner, and make it holy regeneration and sanctification are effects of the creating and renewing agency of the holy spirit.

You will think it not a little singular that Dr. Woods should have so far forgotten himself, as to charge me so indignantly with misrepresenting the orthodox faith : when the very term, which he has marked, as one of the most offensive, is applied in precisely the same manner in the creed, which he has himself subscribed.

When Dr. Woods is ready to say, that an unregenerate man has the power to perform a good act or to have a good thought, in a moral sense, before being a subject of that influence of the spirit of God, which is expressed by orthodox writers by the several phrases, *imparting a new principle, infusing a new relish, giving a new disposition, new inclination, new heart, new nature*; that he can do anything to procure this new heart &c. to be given him; that he can prevent its being given to him, whenever God sees fit to give it; or, when it is given, has the power so to resist its influence, as still to remain a sinner; then, upon the supposition that *his personal faith* is to be considered as the standard of orthodoxy, will he have a right to complain of the representation I have given of the orthodox faith, respecting the impotence of unregenerate man, and the irresistible grace of God in his regeneration; but the same complaint, as you have seen, is equally applicable with respect to the language used by the most respectable orthodox writers. No part of this will he say, while he recollects what he has said in his Letters to Unitarians on this subject, particularly in defence of the use of the words *irresistible, overpowering, invincible*, as applied to the divine influence in regeneration; especially while it is apparent, that in saying it he will virtually give up three, at least, of the principal points in the orthodox faith. Native depravity, for it is impossible that a nature wholly corrupt and tending only to sin, should produce holiness; personal

election, because it cannot be, that the purpose of God should be frustrated by the sinner's doing that, which, from eternity, God had determined that he never should do; and the divine influence, which, according to the scheme, is required in regeneration; since if it be admitted that *that* can be resisted, there will be no certainty, that the purpose of heaven will be accomplished. God may be utterly defeated, and his will effectually opposed.

I have been more minute, perhaps, than was necessary on this subject; but I have thought it might be useful to show very clearly and fully how little dependence can be placed upon the common charges brought against Unitarians by the orthodox, when even such men as Dr. Woods are willing to lend their names to give countenance to one so wholly groundless as that, which led to this examination.

The whole reasoning from p. 310 to 319, respecting the commencement of sin in Adam and his posterity is founded on the several following positions :

" That *sin* lies radically and essentially in a wrong state of the heart, or of moral affection,—that this state of mind is the sum and substance of sin, . . . that without this wrong affection or disposition of the mind no bodily action could be considered as sinful, . . . that an overt act of sin would never result from outward circumstances, were it not for that wrong state of moral feeling, . . . as a personal individual character, the commencement of moral evil in any human being is an *ultimate fact*; i. e. his commencing his existence with a sinful nature, or the commencement of sin in him, cannot be accounted for. . . .

In another respect, it is to be accounted for.... Every man has a relation to Adam as the head of the human species.... All men are sinners in consequence of the sin of Adam.... God has constituted a connexion between the conduct of Adam and the character of his posterity."

Now you will perceive that the whole of this apparatus is resorted to for the purpose of accounting for the actual existence of sin in the world ; sin, according to Dr. Woods' position, implying a previous sinful disposition, and holiness, a holy disposition ; and nothing being more absurd than the supposition, that either a sinful or a holy disposition should produce affections or lead to acts of the opposite character. But the whole of this, (besides that there is, I think, a want of clearness in the statement,) as far as it is intelligible, is not satisfactory. Instead of accounting for the commencement of sin, in each individual, it is only removing the difficulty further back. It is still to be accounted for, that Adam, with a nature entirely holy, affections and dispositions morally right,

" Beginning existence in a state of moral purity,—disposed from the first to love and obey his Creator, and by the exercise of holiness for a time, having done something toward forming *a habit of holiness*, and by his experience of the pleasures of holiness, fortified in a good degree against all temptations to sin,"

It is still, I say, to be accounted for, that Adam, in these circumstances, sinned. In whatever manner the sin of Adam is accounted for; he being admitted to be previously holy, to have no sinful disposition, nothing but temptation operating on a

heart inclined only to love and obey God; in the same manner may the first sin of each individual of his posterity be accounted for, without the supposition of any natural disposition or propensity to sin, or deriving from him a corrupt nature. This was urged upon Dr. Woods in my Answer to his Reply. He has said nothing to remove the difficulty, which it presents against his system. He can say nothing to remove it, but by recurring, as the most rational and consistent Calvinists do, to the *immediate, efficient act of God*. This Dr. Woods does not choose to do. And this I suppose is one of the cases, in which he has chosen to leave his reasoning in "*the awkward condition in which it has been made to appear*," rather than to say, what would indeed remove its awkwardness, but at the same time would express a sentiment, with which the orthodox in general must be exceedingly shocked. Thus to charge the sins of men directly upon God, as his immediate act, might be thought almost as impious and exceptionable, as it is to attribute to man that degree of power, with which the Arminian doctrine of moral liberty invests him.

It was the business of Dr. Woods, not merely to assert again and again and again, as he has done, *the moral agency of Adam*; but to show, upon the principles of orthodoxy, *how it was possible for Adam, with a nature entirely holy, to do any thing himself to change that nature, or, until it was changed, to commit a single sin*; when the main argument he had used to prove native depravity is, *that a single sin implies a previous sinful disposition*; and when he had em-

ployed elaborate reasoning to show, *that it is a manifest contradiction, and the greatest absurdity possible to suppose,* that he could thus change his nature, or until it was changed, could possibly commit a sin.

Nothing could be more to the purpose of my argument on this point, than much of what is said in this passage by Dr. Woods. For in whatever way Adam, with a holy nature, could “begin to have a sinful affection,” in the same way could any one of his posterity, though he were equally holy by nature. “If he, [Adam,] as a moral agent, was so constituted, as to be *capable of different kinds of moral action, and moral affection, that is, good and bad;*” then any one of his posterity and every one of them may have been so constituted. If “*actually to be the subject of good and bad affections and actions, and to change from one to the other, was perfectly within the compass of his moral agency;*” holy and pure as he was by nature, the same must be within the compass of the moral agency of every descendant of Adam, though he were supposed to be as holy and pure by nature, as he was. If *external motives might, as is asserted, excite in Adam, who had no corruption of nature, sinful desires or volitions, or lead him to sinful actions,* they might produce the same effects in any of his posterity, without supposing them to have any corruption of nature.

As the question respecting freedom of will on the one hand and philosophical necessity on the other, has no necessary connexion with the great

points at issue between the Orthodox and Unitarians,—such as native depravity, personal election, atonement, and regeneration by the special efficacious influence of the spirit of God ; I might pass over the whole discussion on this subject from p. 319 to 334, without prejudice to the cause ; since, however the argument were supposed to turn, those points might be unaffected by the issue. But as I believe the doctrine of moral freedom, as opposed to philosophical necessity, as well as to the orthodox doctrine of personal election, to be true ; and that Dr. Woods has said nothing to impair the force of the argument for its truth ; I will, after referring you to what I have said in my Answer to his Reply, Letters V, VII, and IX, add the few following observations upon Dr. Woods' discussion of the subject in his Remarks.

To all that is said, (pp. 321, 322) to show that it is consistent with moral agency and moral freedom to act under the influence of reason and of affections, bad or good, I fully agree. But I am not ready to agree to the definition of moral freedom which follows p. 323.

That "it is freedom from that physical coercion or force, which either causes actions that are not voluntary, or prevents those, which the agent actually chooses to perform."

This is so far from being a correct and complete definition of *moral freedom*, that it makes no part of the definition. It is the definition of *natural or physical liberty*.

A man is in extreme distress or danger, and it is my duty, if it were in my power, to relieve him ;

but I am fast bound in chains, and can stir neither hand nor foot. According to the above definition, I have no *moral freedom*, *am not a moral agent*. But if Dr. Woods will turn to some of his other definitions, he will find, that the *morality* lies not in the *external act*, but in the *disposition* and *will*. I may therefore have the *disposition* and *will* in perfection, and am accordingly a subject of all that is *moral* in the action, notwithstanding my physical restraint. Or I may, on the other hand, have the disposition and the will *not* to give the relief, though it were in my power, and thus may incur all the moral guilt that I could have incurred, had I been free from bodily restraint. So far from true is the assertion, "*that we always consider a man as deprived of moral agency by being under the influence of such physical force*," that we never consider it as impairing, in any degree, his moral agency or accountableness. He is not accountable for the external act, which he had not the power to perform; but *he is accountable for all that was moral in the act*, i. e. the disposition, the will, the intention. Will Dr. Woods say, (and yet he must say it to be consistent with himself,) that he, who attempted a robbery or murder, incurred not the guilt of robbery or murder, because he was prevented by physical restraint from accomplishing his purpose? or that he, on the other hand, who risked his life to save that of a fellow mortal, was entitled to none of the moral desert of the action, because he was withheld from the power of performing the deed?

As all the morality, according to Dr. Woods, lies in the disposition, temper, intention, will, and no part of it in the action itself, *all the freedom which has any relation to its morality must regard the disposition and will*, and not the external action itself. All that is moral in the agency of the man must also lie in this. A man may be a *moral agent* without the power of performing a single *physical act*; and, on the other hand, he may have the physical power of performing a great variety of actions, the best, and the worst, and yet be destitute of what constitutes a moral agent. That is, he may be an idiot or insane. Again, Dr. Woods says,

"It is a law of our nature, that a certain part of our bodily and mental actions should be under the control of the will. Now a *moral agent must be free from whatever would take away that control.*" That is, he must be thus free in order to his being a moral agent.

This is also incorrect. For according to this, he, who, with the intention of murder, should aim a deadly thrust at the heart of another,—if, at the moment, the stroke were arrested by a spasm, a paralytic shock, or any thing that deprived him of the power of voluntary motion, or of the direction of voluntary motion,—he must be absolved from all guilt. But the fact is, that moral agency, and moral freedom, have no relation whatever to the control, which the agent has over his bodily actions. He may be as complete a moral agent, and have as perfect moral freedom, without any such control, as with it; and be as justly answerable to conscience and to God. On the other hand, he may have this control, and yet not be a moral agent.

He who has not a limb that will obey his will, nor an organ of the body that he can control, whose hands and feet move at random, or in an opposite direction from that to which he would guide them ; and whose tongue utters the words of ribaldry or blasphemy, when his heart dictates a prayer, or a prayer, when he meant to deride or blaspheme, may yet have all the attributes of a moral and accountable being ; may have all that constitutes the proper *freedom* of such a being, and may possess a character eminently holy, or eminently sinful. But according to Dr. Woods, such a man has no moral freedom, is not a moral agent, is not accountable, and is incapable alike of sin and of holiness. On the other hand, the actions of an insane man may be under the entire control of his will, and yet he have no moral freedom, nor be a moral agent. Dr. Woods proceeds to another characteristic.

“ The freedom essential to a moral agent implies, therefore, a freedom from whatever would prevent his will from being influenced by his affections.”

If by this he means, the particular affections existing and operating *at the time*, and which relate to the *particular action*, which is the subject of volition, it is doubtless true, and he might have spared himself the labour of displaying the absurdity of the opposite supposition. But this is not what he must have intended, if he meant it to be of any avail to his system. He must have meant, I think, the *affections* considered in the same sense in which he has before used them, as constituting a

permanent character, equivalent to the general disposition, inclination &c. In this sense it is not true ; and indeed the very reverse of it is a most important truth. It is of the very essence of moral liberty, that *the will is not invariably and necessarily connected with the prevailing and characteristic disposition, and affections of the agent.* If it were so, the saint or good man having holy affections, a right disposition, *every act of the will must be holy and right.* He would be incapable of a single sinful volition, consequently incapable of a single sin ; for by the scheme, whenever the will varied from the affections, he would cease to be a moral agent, and cease of course to be capable of moral good or evil. But this freedom from sin in the holiest men, Dr. Woods will strenuously deny. "Not an orthodox man in the world, he will say, believes it. What the orthodox affirm is, that they have *some holiness, with much remaining sin.*" p. 307. But he will say also, for he has said it again and again, that holiness implies a holy disposition, holy affections, as much as sinfulness implies a sinful disposition and affections ; and sin or a sinful volition can no more flow from holy affections, than holiness or a holy volition can flow from sinful affections. If then, as the definition of moral agency, which I am now considering, states, it is essential to it that the will be influenced by the affections, and by the affections be meant, what I suppose is to be understood in all other cases, where it occurs, it inevitably follows, that one who has any true holiness, can never have a sinful voli-

tion. For whenever he has a volition that is in its nature sinful, he ceases to be a moral agent, ceases therefore to be capable of moral action, ceases then to be capable of either virtue or vice, and of course is no longer an accountable being.

That moral agency is affected, and may be entirely “destroyed by an essential disorder or derangement of the rational faculties,” will not be denied. By delirium, or insanity, or idiocy, a man may cease altogether to be a moral and accountable being, and be equally incapable of sin or holiness: and yet in either case he may have the passions and affections in their full strength, the will influenced entirely by them, and the power of executing whatever he wills.

With these detections of the fallaciousness of the whole ground work of Dr. Woods’ elaborate and subtil reasonings on the subject before us, it will be easy to expose the fallacy of all that follows.

The error of Dr. Woods’ scheme, and of his reasoning upon it, lies, not in asserting the influence of motives upon the conduct of moral agents, which he seems to intimate to be the distinction between his scheme and that of moral freedom; nor in asserting, “that men never choose and act contrary to that, which is the prevailing affection of the heart *at the time.*” That every moral action is performed under the influence of motives, and that it is always *as the prevailing affection of the heart at the time,* is as true on the supposition of Arminian liberty, as upon that of philosophical necessity, or calvinistic predestination. The question is still,

whether in the exercise of this prevailing affection, he is a free or a necessary agent. *It is the prevailing affection at the time.* It is not, (and here lies the fallacy of the whole reasoning of the several pages before us,) it is *not the general disposition*, and what he terms the *reigning affection of the heart*, but the *prevailing affection at the time*, that determines what the particular act shall be.

But it is constantly implied by our author, and indeed expressly asserted, and it is a necessary part of the system he advocates, that it is *the general disposition*, which must in all cases prevail. It is not any modification of external circumstances, that constitutes the prevailing motive; for “we yield to one or the other of two opposite external motives, just according to our *predominant inclinations or affections.*” This predominant inclination here must mean, that general one, which according to the scheme, constitutes a man holy or sinful; because he explains it by adding, *there may be a principle in every human mind, superior to all motives of this character.* In every good man there is such a principle. It is not any modification of the several appetites and passions, nor yet the power of reason, and knowledge of right and wrong, that decides the action. “Though alike in all these respects, they may be totally unlike as to moral principle, or the *reigning affections of the heart.* We always do modify the influence of all other motives, by the grand motive, the *reigning affection of the heart.*”

He means then, that a man *always* acts from the *reigning affection of the heart, the grand motive,*

which modifies the influence of all other motives, the one great governing motive, which constantly overcomes all minor motives and contrary to which no choice of a moral nature ever did take place, or ever can."

This great governing motive, which modifies the influence of all other motives, this reigning affection of the heart, in wicked men, is *the nature with which they come into being*, the disposition and tendency with which they were created. In good men, it is *that holiness, which is communicated in regeneration*, by which the nature of the sinner is changed, and his taste, his disposition, his inclination is opposite to what it was before.

Now it follows from this, as I have shown before, that every act of a sinner, whatever be the substance of the act, and whatever the particular disposition or intention, which prevailed at the time, must be sinful. To this Dr. Woods will agree. But it follows also, that every act of a regenerate man, whatever be the substance of the act, and whatever particular affection, passion, or motive, prevailing at the time, led to it, is holy. And as the kindest and most amiable dispositions, and most benevolent actions of an unregenerate man are, according to Dr. Woods, sinful; I see not, upon the same principle, why the bad actions of regenerate men, performed under the occasional influence of the bad passions, their pride, cruelty, injustice, are not holy. If the corrupt unrenewed nature of the former, serves to vitiate all his good actions; the principle of holiness in the latter ought also to sanc-

tify his bad deeds ; and in that case, the deep remorse of David for his delinquency in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba,—and the tears of Peter for having under a momentary impression of fear denied his Lord, were causeless, and might have been spared. If they were holy men, these were holy acts.

Such are clearly the consequences, which follow from the reasoning in the pages under consideration. Their inconsistency with opinions expressly asserted, and with the great principles of the orthodox scheme, is a circumstance with which I am not concerned. It is not for me to reconcile the parts of a system, which are hostile to each other ; and still more at variance, as I am fully persuaded, with reason, experience, and scripture.

On p. 343 is a passage, which I am sorry to notice, but which must not be suffered to pass without stricture. I did indeed, as is there asserted, apologize for adopting a strain of levity, which I could hardly reconcile with my sense of propriety, though it was only to enable Dr. Woods to perceive the futility as well as injustice of the course, which he had allowed himself to pursue. It would have well become him to have met the *frankness*, which he is pleased to mention with honour, by an apology equally frank and honorable. I am not disappointed, that he has not done it ; but *I am disappointed*, that he has been willing to call your attention again to the subject, by offering a defence, instead of an apology. I am disappointed, that in a sober review,

and with deliberate reflection on the subject, he is willing to repeat the assertion, that such, as he then stated, he believes to be the real consequences of the opinions, which I had advanced.

It has been my aim to abridge the discussion, which I have now brought to a close, and reduce it to as narrow a compass as possible, by omitting some things, which I had intended to notice, and confining myself to those, which had a more immediate bearing upon the main questions, or which were necessary for my vindication from unfounded charges. In the present publication, as in the preceding, it has been my endeavour to express my own opinions with clearness, and without reserve, and to treat those, which have been advanced in opposition to them, and the arguments with which they are defended, with fairness and decorum.

In the whole of this controversy I have not lost sight of the high responsibility, which he takes upon himself, who undertakes the public discussion of the most abstruse questions, and the most important doctrines of religion. Of that responsibility, and of the duties implied in it, I am reminded by the prayer, with which my opponent concludes his remarks, and in which I most devoutly unite with him,—“that whatever is erroneous in our views of religion may be corrected; that whatever has been wrong in our mode of conducting this controversy may be forgiven; and that what we have both written, may be made subservient to the cause of truth and love.”

In the spirit which dictates that prayer, I have felt myself required to reexamine with care what I have written, under a deep impression of accountableness to God, to conscience, and to the christian community, for the fidelity, integrity, and christian charity, with which the whole has on my part been conducted ; and for any wrong influence, which, whether intentionally or carelessly, I may have been the means of producing. The revision has been attended with this satisfaction, that, in the two publications which have preceded the present, only one instance occurs of a sentiment, which I am not willing to leave as the expression of my present deliberate opinion ; either on account of any doubt of its truth, or apprehension of its practical influence.

The passage, to which I refer, is in the third Letter of the first series, on the 25th page. It is the following fragment of a sentence—“*and that even in the worst men good feelings and principles,*” &c. to the end of the sentence. That part of a sentence, I think it my duty to recal, not on account of its bearing in this controversy ; for the evidence for neither of the great points at issue, is either strengthened or weakened by it ; but because, in the sense, which my words most naturally convey to the reader, I believe it not to express the truth, and because I am apprehensive, that its practical influence, as far as it shall have any, will be such as I should deprecate. I readily admit also, the justice of the remarks, which it has drawn from my opponent. The rest of the sentence, and all that

is connected with it, I have seen no reason to alter ; and what remains, contains all that affects the argument, which I was there pursuing.

The great articles of the Unitarian faith, I am satisfied, rest upon a foundation, that can never be shaken. The more they are contemplated, the dearer they are to my heart ; and the more closely I have had occasion to examine the evidence upon which they stand, and the objections that have been urged against them, the more firmly am I persuaded of their truth and their importance. The oftener they are presented to view, and made the subject of public discussion, the better will they be understood, the more clearly will their evidence, their reasonableness, and their foundation in the word of God be perceived, and the sooner, I am confident, shall we witness their general prevalence. As foreign, therefore, as all my habits and all my feelings have been from religious controversy, I thank God for the opportunity, which this discussion has given me, of contributing what was in my power to so important an end, by the exposition and defence of some of the most important theological opinions, generally maintained by Unitarian christians. It has been no small satisfaction to me to know, that the argument on the other side has been so conducted, as to leave no room to doubt, that the orthodox objections have been stated in their full strength, and with every advantage of which they are capable. For in this, as in every case, the cause of truth, and its eventual triumph, is best promoted, by hav-

ing the arguments, by which it is supported, subjected to a thorough and severe examination.

It has given me pleasure also to notice the good temper and expression of kind feelings, with which the discussion has been conducted by my opponent, on the side of the orthodox faith. It is for the reader to judge, whether it has been met on my part with a spirit equally manifesting a love of truth and christian charity. In whatever degree this has been the case, it leads to the hope, that in the same degree the cause of truth, and holiness, and love will be promoted, and that those, who read, though they should not be brought nearer together in their articles of faith, will not, on the other hand, be separated wider asunder, in their feelings ;—that whether they are able or not to arrive at a unity of faith, upon all points, which they deem important ; they will make some approach toward that unity of spirit, in the bond of peace ; which is a far more important and desirable object, and a more decisive mark of their christian character.